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Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----------026019 261320Z /43
O 261023Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6643
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY GABORONE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAPE TOWN 0117

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: RH, UK, PDEV, PINT, PEPR
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: TALKS WITH SITHOLE REPRESENTATIVE

1. YESTERDAY MORNING (JAN 25) OUR POLITICAL OFFICER IN PRETORIA, STEVE MCDONALD, RECEIVED A PHONE CALL FROM NOEL MUKONO, SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS (ANC-SITHOLE) ASKING FOR AN APPOINTMENT. MUKONO HAD JUST ARRIVED FROM SALISBURY AND WAS CALLING FROM JAN SMUTS AIRPORT. HE INDICATED THAT HE WOULD ALSO BE VISITING BRITISH EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES. MCDONALD AGREED TO SEE HIM DURING THE AFTERNOON AT THE EMBASSY.

2. MCDONALD IMMEDIATELY LET ME KNOW OF THE CALL. I IN TURN CALLED SIR DAVID SCOTT TO SEE WHAT HE KNEW ABOUT THE VISITOR AND TO SUGGEST THAT MCDONALD NOT RECEIVE MUKONO SEPARATELY BUT SIT IN ON MEETING WITH HIS
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REPRESENTATIVE. SIR DAVID WAS UNINFORMED OF MUKONO'S REQUEST. HE SAID HE WOULD CHECK PRETORIA AND GIVE THE NECESSARY INSTRUCTIONS THAT MCDONALD JOIN THEIR MAN. IN THE MEANTIME I INSTRUCTED MCDONALD TO LET THE BRITISH CARRY THE BALL AND LIMIT HIS PARTICIPATION TO MAKING CLEAR, AS NECESSARY, THAT (A) THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN IS BEING VIGOROUSLY PURSUED AS REFLECTED BY

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THE FORTHCOMING MEETING IN MALTA, AND (B) ANY SETTLE-
MENT TO BE INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE MUST INVOLVE
ALL OF THE MAJOR NATIONALIST FIRCES IN THE TRANSITIONAL
PROCESS AND ELECTIONS LEADING TO INDEPENDENCE. I ALSO
ADMONISHED MCDONALD THAT HE WAS NOT TO BE DRAWN INTO
GIVING ANY ADVICE ON THE INTERNAL NEGOTIATIONS OR IMPLY
ACQUIESCENCE IN THEM.

3. THE MEETING WITH MUKONO TOOK PLACE AT THE HOME OF
THE BRITISH EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVE FROM 1230 TO 1400 HOURS.
MCDONALD'S REPORT OF WHAT TOOK PLACE IS AS FOLLOWS:

BEGIN QUOTE: (1) I MET WITH NEOL MUKONO, SECRETARY FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, ANC (SITHOLE), AND RAURI CHISHOLM,
COUNSELOR OF CHANCERY FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS OIC
AND MI6 STATION COMMANDER, FOR APPROXIMATELY
AN HOUR AND A HALF. MUKONO'S PRIMARY MISSION WAS TO
PASS TO BOTH THE AMERICANS AND BRITISH MINUTES OF MEETINGS
OF THE EIGHTH THROUGH ELEVENTH SESSIONS OF THE INTERNAL
TALKS, THE LAST ONE ENDING ON JANUARY 3, AND SEVERAL
POSITION PAPERS BY THE SITHOLE GROUP. I WILL BE SYNTHESIZING
THESE DOCUMENTS AND REPORTING THEM THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS.

(2) THIS CABLE IS TO BRING TO YOUR ATTENTION THE
ATMOSPHERE OF THE MEETING AND THE CONDUCT OF MR.
CHISHOLM. AFTER PRESENTING THE PAPERS AND BRIEFING
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US ON THE CONTENTS, TO INCLUDE HIS OWN SUMMARY OF THE
MEETINGS SINCE JANUARY 3, MUKONO THEN ASKED ABOUT UK/US
POSITIONS ON THE INTERNAL TALKS AND ON THE UPCOMING
MALTA TALKS. AS INSTRUCTED, I ALLOWED MR. CHISHOLM
TO CARRY THE BULK OF THE RESPONSES AND ONLY INTERJECTED
WHEN ASKED AND ONLY ALONG THE LINES OF MY GUIDANCE.
CHISHOLM, HOWEVER, WAS VERY OPEN AND TALKATIVE. WHEN ASKED
BY MUKONO ABOUT THE MALTA TALKS, CHISHOLM WAS QUICK TO SAY THAT
THEY WERE NOT INTENDED TO UNDERMINE THE INTERNAL TALKS BUT
MERELY TO KEEP THE PATRIOTIC FRONT IN LINE. CHISHOLM EXPRESSED
SYMPATHY THAT THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT WAS THE RIGHT TRACK AND
LED MUKONO INTO AGREEING THAT THE PF WAS DIVIDED, NOT
INTERNALLY POPULAR, AND A PAWN FOR OTHER POWRS,
MENTIONING THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS BY NAME. ON THE
MAKEUP OF THE MILITARY, CHISHOLM STATED THAT TO BASE A
ZIMBABWE NATIONAL ARMY ON THE "TERRORIST"FORCES
(A TERM THAT HE USED, NOT MUKONO) WAS PURE FOLLY,
"NOT FOR POLITICAL BUT MILITARY REASONS." HE THEN
WENT INTO A BACKGROUND OF BRITISH COLONIAL TRANSFERS
AND THE DESIRABILITY OF KEEPING ARMIES INTACT. ALTHOUGH
I AM UNABLE TO RECALL EACH POINT MADE BY CHISHOLM,
THROUGHOUT THE CONVERSATION HE SHOWED SYMPATHY OPENLY

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FOR THE INTERNAL TALKS, RIDICULED THE BONA FIDES AND
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PATRIOTIC FRONT (" NOT A FRONT,
ANYWAY"), AND ASSURED MUKONO THAT NO ONE WAS ATTEMPTING
TO UPSET THE INTERNAL SETTLEMENT TALKS.

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ACTION SS-25

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EXDIS

(3) COMMENT: MY COMMENT IS TWOFOLD, FIRST ON
MUKONO'S APPROACH AND SECONDLY ON CHISHOLM. MUNONO'S
PRIMARY CONCERN SEEMED TO BE THAT AT MALTA WE
NOT "TORPEDO" THE INTERNAL TALKS. UNLIKE GABELLAH
WHO SPOKE OF THE NEED TO BRING NKOMO OR MUGABE INTO
THE SETTLEMENT PLAN, MUKONO REFERRED IN DEROGATORY
TERMS TO THE PF LEADERS, ADDING THAT IF THEY WISHED TO
JOIN THE TALKS IN SALISBURY, FINE; OTHERWISE THEY
COULD REMAIN IN THE BUSH. HE SPOKE WITH A GREATER
CONFIDENCE THAN GABELLAH AND SEEMED MORE OR LESS
INFORMING US OF THINGS DONE RATHER THAN DESIRING TO CONSULT.
HE SAID THAT HE WAS ON HIS WAY TO BLANTYRE AND THEN LONDON
AFTER HE LEFT PRETORIA. HE WAS VAGUE ABOUT WHO HE WOULD SEE
IN LONDON, BUT CHISHOLM ENCOURAGED HIM TO SEE OWEN.

(4) CHISHOLM, AS IS OBVIOUS FROM ABOVE, SPOKE
TO MUKONO SUBSTANTIALLY IN CONTRADICTION TO THE ANGLO-
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AMERICAN INITIATIVE AS I UNDERSTAND IT. HE MAY WELL
HAVE BEEN JUST VOICING HIS OWN OPINION, AS HE SEVERAL
TIMES PREFACED REMARKS WITH "MY GOVERNMENT DOESN'T
AGREE, BUT ..." OR "MR. MCDONALD MAY NOT AGREE, BUT...".
I FEEL MY ROLE WAS CONSTRUCTIVE, BECAUSE MUKONO, A
SHARP AND PERCEPTIVE PERSON, COULD OBVIOUSLY TELL
THAT MY SILENCE WAS PURPOSEFUL AND WOULD CONTINUALLY
COME BACK TO ME WITH QUESTIONS ON US POSITIONS.
I RESPONDED ALWAYS, IN AS MANY DIFFERENT WAYS AS I
COULD THINK TO PHRASE IT, THAT WE WANTED TO ASSURE
SITHOLE THAT THE ANGLO-AMERICAN PLAN IS ON TRACK AND
THAT ANY SETTLEMENT TO BE INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTABLE
MUST INVOLVE ALL MAJOR NATIONALIST GROUPS. I ELABORATED
ONLY TO SAY THAT WE MEANT SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA AS WELL
AS THE PATRIOTIC FRONT WHEN WE SAID "ALL NATIONALIST
GROUPS." BUT, MUKONO MUST HAVE LEFT WITH SOME FEELING
OF UK SYMPATHY FOR AN INTERNAL SETTLEMENT. END QUOTE

4. COMMENT: THE KIND, AND PERHAPS ACCURATE, INTERPRETATION
TO PLACE ON CHISHOLM'S PERFORMANCE IS THAT HE IS NEW
AND WAS NOT PROPERLY INSTRUCTED. IN ANY EVENT
THE SIGNALS HE WAS GIVING MUKONO WERE APPALLINGLY
BAD AND NEED TO BE CORRECTED. TO WHAT EXTENT MCDONALD'S
CAUTIONING RESPONSES MAY HAVE CORRECTED WRONG IMPRESSIONS
IS NOT CLEAR, ALTHOUGH AS STEVE POINTS OUT IN HIS
REPORT THE CONTRAST BETWEEN HIS REPLIES AND CHISHOLM'S
FREE-WHEELING LOQUACIOUSNESS WAS NOT LOST ON MUKONO.
I SHALL SPEAK TO SIR DAVID SCOTT ABOUT THIS BUT
STRONGLY URGE BRITISH BE PERSUADED TO DO SOMETHING IN
MALAWI OR LONDN TO CORRECT THE SITUATION.
BOWDLER

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